

NEWS RELEASE

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City Park Ambassadors to Engage with Public on Physical Distancing *To Stop the Spread of COVID-19*

Summary

On April 8, 2020 the Province of BC announced the closure of provincial parks, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This closure affects provincial parks only - at this time, most parks and trails within the City of Nanaimo remain open. The exception to this is playgrounds, sport courts (hockey, lacrosse, pickle ball, volleyball, basketball, tennis), skateboard parks, Steve Smith Bike park and four gated dog parks (Beban, Wardopper, St. George Ravine and Northfield) which remain closed.

To stop the spread of COVID-19, the City of Nanaimo Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture has created a new area of the Parks Ambassador Program by sending out trained Park Ambassadors to two of Nanaimo's busiest parks. This program is intended to create awareness of the importance of practising physical distancing while in the parks or on the trails, as well as share other health-related actions that individuals can take to stay healthy and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Starting this Easter long weekend, Phase 1 of this program will see ambassadors at areas along the waterfront in Maffeo Sutton Park (Queen Elizabeth II Promenade, Sway-A-Lana Lagoon, Georgia Park, McGregor Park, Diana Krall Plaza and along areas of the Port Authority's Harbourfront Walkway) and Westwood Lake Park to remind residents to always practice physical distancing while in Nanaimo's parks and while on the trails.

Physical distancing is defined as being at least two metres (6 feet) away from anybody who is not part of your household. If this pilot program is found to be successful, the City will consider expanding it other busy parks and trails.

These ambassadors will easily be identified by the public. They will be wearing bright yellow Parks, Recreation and Culture vests.

Strategic Link: The City of Nanaimo is committed to the safety and well-being of its residents.

Key Points

- Social/physical distancing has been shown to be effective in preventing the community spread of COVID-19, which is why City Parks Ambassadors will be at Westwood Lake Park and Maffeo Sutton Park starting Easter long weekend to encourage physical distancing.
- City Parks Ambassadors are not authorized to detain an individual as a result of a contravention or suspected contravention to a Public Health Order. They are also not authorized to issue a fine or penalty associated with a breach of the public health orders.
- If this pilot program is successful, City of Nanaimo staff will expand it to other busy parks and trails.

Quotes

"The popularity of these two parks is the reason they were chosen as part of this pilot program. With the warmer weather, we know more people will be out enjoying Nanaimo's parks and trails, and we want to keep everybody safe and healthy by having Park Ambassadors remind people how important physical distancing is as a way to stop the spread of Covid-19. If successful, we will expand this program to other Nanaimo parks and trails."

Art Groot
Director, Facility & Parks Operations
City of Nanaimo

Quick Facts

- There are no Public Health Orders from the Government of BC requiring the public to maintain physical distancing outside their own homes; however, the Province has provided strong recommendations and guidance that the public practice physical distancing.

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Contact:

Art Groot
Director, Facility & Parks Operations
City of Nanaimo
250-755-7542



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